

REMARKS

Applicants appreciate the Examiner's thorough consideration provided the present application. Claims 1, 3-11 and 13-20 are now present in the application. The specification and claims 1, 13-16, 18 and 19 have been amended. Claims 5-11, 19 and 20 have been withdrawn in the previous Office Action. Claims 2 and 12 have been cancelled. Claims 1 and 18 are independent. Reconsideration of this application, as amended, is respectfully requested.

The specification and claims have been amended without adding new matters because the outer column 21 is in contact with the separating roller 1 in the first rotating state, the inner column 22 is rotatably supported on the first shaft 3 and arranged within the outer column 21, and the resilient member 29 wraps around the inner column 22 and applies pressure on the inner column 22, such that the inner column 22 and the first shaft 3 to act on each other to produce the damping torque, as shown in FIGS. 5, 13 and 14. In addition, the first shaft 3 provides the damping torque for stopping the rotation of the friction roller 2 according to a damping force between the first shaft 3 and the friction roller 2 according to a damping force between the first shaft 3 and the friction roller 2, as described in page 12, lines 1-3. Furthermore, the "long slot 25" is changed to the "opening 25", which is lengthwise formed on a surface of the inner column 22, as shown in FIG. 14.

Claim Rejection under 35 USC 112

Claims 2 and 14 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which Applicants regard as the invention. This rejection is respectfully traversed.

Claim 2 has been cancelled and incorporated into claim 1, and the the word "selectively" is deleted. Claim 14 has been amended to change the "long slot" into the "opening" and to state that the opening is lengthwise formed on a surface of the inner column so as to make amended claim 14 clear. Accordingly, all pending claims are now definite and clear. Reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, are therefore respectfully requested.

Claim Rejection under 35 USC 102

Claims 1-4 and 12-17 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Japanese Publication No. 62-275941. Claims 1-4 and 12-17 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Takahashi, U.S. Patent No. 5,016,866. This rejection is respectfully traversed.

Independent claim 1 has been amended to include the features of claim 2 and 12 as well as the additional feature that the resilient member wraps around the inner column and applies pressure on the inner column for the inner column and the first shaft to act on each other to produce the damping torque. One of ordinary skill in the art may easily understand the additional feature with reference to FIGS. 13 and 14 of this application. Therefore, no new matter is added.

In this application, as shown in FIGS. 5, 6, 13 and 14, the outer column 22 is the outermost part of the friction roller 2. Therefore, one of ordinary skill in the art may easily understand that the outer column 22 is in contact with the separating roller 1 in the first rotating state.

In the '941 patent, however, the outer column (15) in FIGS. 3 and 5 of the '941 patent

never contacts the separating roller (2). Therefore, amended independent claim 1 is completely different from the '941 patent.

In this invention, the damping torque is generated **inside** the friction roller and the friction roller is **not always fixed to** the first shaft in this application. Therefore, amended independent claim 1 is completely different from the '941 patent.

In the '941 patent, the damping torque is **not** caused by the first shaft (including 4) against the friction roller (including 3). Instead, the damping torque is caused by the torque generator (including 11, 12, 13 and 15) against the first shaft (including 4), and then the damping torque is directly transmitted to the friction roller (including 3) in the '941 patent. Therefore, the damping torque is generated **outside** the friction roller (including 3) and the friction roller is **always fixed to** the first shaft (including 4) in the '941 patent.

In addition, in the '866 patent, the damping torque is **not** caused by the first shaft (including 62) against the friction roller (including 44). Instead, the damping torque is caused by the torque limiter 46 against the first shaft (including 62), and then the damping torque is directly transmitted to the friction roller (including 44) in the '866 patent (see Abstract: " A reverse shaft (62) is formed integrally with the reverse roller (44)."). Accordingly, the damping torque is generated **outside** the friction roller (including 44) and the friction roller is **always fixed to** the first shaft (including 62) in the '866 patent. Therefore, amended independent claim 1 is completely different from the '866 patent.

Accordingly, amended independent claim 1 should now be in condition for allowance. In addition, claims 3-4 and 13-17, which depend on amended independent claim 1, should now be in condition for allowance.

Allowable Subject Matter

The Examiner has indicated that dependent claim 18 would be allowable if rewritten to include all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. Applicants greatly appreciate the indication of allowable subject matter by the Examiner. By the present Amendment, claim 18 has been rewritten in independent form to include all of the limitations of its base claim 1. Accordingly, it is believed that amended independent claim 18 is in condition for allowance.

CONCLUSION

Since the remaining patents cited by the Examiner have not been utilized to reject the claims, but merely to show the state of the prior art, no further comments are necessary with respect thereto.

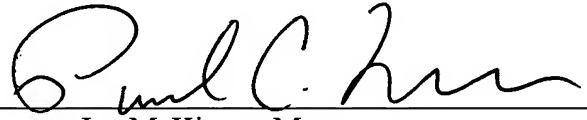
It is believed that a full and complete response has been made to the Office Action, and that as such, the Examiner is respectfully requested to send the application to Issue.

In the event there are any matters remaining in this application, the Examiner is invited to contact Joe McKinney Muncy, Registration No. 32,334 at (703) 205-8000 in the Washington, D.C. area.

If necessary, the Commissioner is hereby authorized in this, concurrent, and future replies, to charge payment or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 02-2448 for any additional fees required under 37 C.F.R. §§1.16 or 1.17; particularly, extension of time fees.

Respectfully submitted,

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